

June 23, 2004

Opening Statement by Congressman Paul E. Gillmor
House Financial Services Committee
Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit
Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity
Joint Hearing entitled, "Promoting Homeownership by Ensuring Liquidity in the
Subprime Mortgage Market"

I'd like to thank our subcommittee chairmen for calling this important hearing and for allowing us this opportunity to continue our discussion of issues related to the subprime mortgage lending market.

Since the early 1990s the subprime market has greatly expanded with just \$34 billion in subprime mortgages originated in 1994 and \$213 billion in 2002. This increase in subprime lending has given many American consumers the opportunity to realize their dreams of homeownership, despite their less than perfect credit.

While subprime lending has increased access to credit for many worthy Americans it has also, in some cases, enabled vulnerable populations to be targeted by abusive or "predatory" lenders. In response to such practices many states and localities have enacted "predatory lending" laws requiring new consumer disclosures, prohibiting certain terms, and creating new legal protections for borrowers who are victims of abusive lending practices.

In my home state of Ohio, the city of Cleveland passed a law restricting high loan rates and other subprime practices intended to prohibit "predatory" activities. However, as was detailed in a Cleveland Plain Dealer article, this law only served to drive lenders out of Cleveland during the 14 months before it was found unconstitutional. Residents who had less than perfect credit found it almost impossible to find a home loan in the city of Cleveland.

I am happy to be an original cosponsor of HR 833, the Responsible Lending Act of 2003, legislation to establish a federal standard to combat unfair and deceptive practices in the high-cost mortgage market, establish a consumer mortgage protection board, and

establish licensing and minimum standards for mortgage brokers. This legislation would establish a balanced federal standard to combat “predatory” lending practices while maintaining access for consumers to the subprime market.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for calling this important hearing and I look forward to an informative session.